1609/514

THE

LETTERS

OF

BRUTUS.

TO

CERTAIN CELEBRATED POLITICAL CHARACTERS.

Primores populi arripuit——
Scilicet uni æquus virtuti atque ejus amicis.

DUBLIN:

PRINTED BY WILLIAM PORTER,

FOR P. BYRNE, J. MOORE, J. JONES, A. GRUEBEER,
W. JONES, AND R. WHITE.

M.DCC.XCI.

BRITISH MUSEUM
15 JUN 68

ADVERTISEMENT.

EDINBURGH, APRIL 16, 1791.

ABOUT twelve months ago, a News-Paper was eſtabliſhed here, under the title of THE EDINBURGH HERALD, which has been honoured, not only with the patronage and approbation of many perſons of the higheſt rank, but by the occaſional aſſiſtance of ſome of the moſt celebrated literary men in this part of the kingdom. Among the valuable communications that have been made to the Readers of that Paper are the LETTERS now preſented to the Public. They have been ſo much admired in Scotland, and ſo much talked of in the political circles of London, where the EDINBURGH HERALD is not unknown, that an Edition of them ſeparately ſeemed to be generally expected. The Author, like JUNIUS, has choſen to conceal himſelf, and has even left the Publiſhers uncertain whether his reſidence is in the Metropolis of South or of North Britain. Whatever are his motives for this concealment, they are not thoſe of JUNIUS; and this perhaps is the only circumſtance in which the Letters of *Brutus* will refuſe a compariſon with thoſe of his celebrated predeceſſor.

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LETTERS

FROM

BRUTUS.

LETTER I.

To Lieutenant General B———.

SIR,

EVERY Moraliſt has told us, that there are certain ſituations which try the conduct of men, which afford a criterion to judge of the ſtrength of their underſtandings, and the goodneſs of their hearts. Of theſe the moſt unfavourable is ſuppoſed to be Proſperity, which not only endangers the propriety of our conduct, but awakens that envy by which our conduct will be criticiſed. Misfortune, on the other hand, while it leſſens our propenſity to many vices and follies, produces in others that compaſſion from which ſlighter vices and follies find pardon and indulgence.

It has been your peculiar ill fortune, Sir, to meet with diſtreſsful and mortifying circumſtances, which neither improved your mind, nor produced com-

paſſion for its weakneſs. Your own eſtimation of your abilities always kept pace with the proofs of your incapacity; and you claimed from the world its reſpect and applauſe, in moments when you ſhould have left it to forget its contempt, or to retain its indifference. In the courſe of the diſaſtrous war, in which you acted ſo conſpicuous a part, it was one great cauſe of our national calamities, that public ſhame was loſt, and public indignation ſeemed to be aſleep; but you, Sir, came boldly forth to diſclaim the one, and to provoke the other. Still, however, while you appeared to act but on the defenſive, moderate and good-natured men were inclined to overlook your preſumption; and, believing you to mean no harm, and to feel no malice, were contented to ſmile at your ſelf-conceit, and left the trappings of your dignity and the tinſel of your language to decorate, or at leaſt to ſhade your retirement.

But of late, Sir, you have ventured on ſeveral occaſions to ſtep into the field as a challenger, and to aſſume a tone of cenſure on the actions of others, which the eaſier diſpoſition of other times had not been provoked to faſten upon yours. In the recent caſe of *Captain Williams* in particular, you took on yourſelf the character of an accuſer and a judge; and, plumed in the experience of a ſoldier, ventured to pronounce his conduct to be *murther*. Did it never ſtrike you, Sir, that any application could be made to yourſelf? or does the mention of military duty, on which you were ſo eloquent, touch no ſtring that jars within you? If you are ſo blind to your

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your own character; and if in that blindneſs you ceaſe to be inoffenſive, I ſhall be juſtified in making you a little better acquainted with that ſort of eſtimation in which you are held by the diſcerning part of the world.

That part of the world, indeed, did not augur much from the habits of your early life, or conceive that the idle and diſſipated ſociety of London could fit a man for performing the duties of a general, or bearing the hardſhips of a ſoldier. There were men, however, whoſe levity could ſmile even after the diſaſter of *Saratoga*, who obſerved that your education was not ill-ſuited to your circumſtances; you had, at leaſt, learned to bear the viciſſitudes of fortune at the Univerſity of *St. James's ſtreet:* where you had acquired your *ſtile*, it was not ſo eaſy for them to determine, unleſs it might be ſuppoſed, from your early propenſity to Comedy, that you had borrowed it from a well-known character in Ben Johnſon. But though generally very faithful in your Comic Imitations, you had, in this, ſomewhat departed from your model. Every body has admired the diſtinction that great author has made between the ſtile and deportment of his *Bobadil* in the inſolence of proſperity, and under the preſſure of mortification and diſgrace. You ſuffered diſgrace like *Bobadil;* but you did not, like him, abate the ſwell of your language. You told us the fate of that gallant army which your blunders had led on to defeat and captivity, in the ſame pompous jargon with which you announced the early ſucceſs which accident had gained you, of which, by a ſingular felicity of miſ-

conduct, you contrived to throw away all the advantage. Claſſical alluſion is your *forte*, and the hackneyed quotation of

" Paup et exſul
" Projicit ampullas et ſeſquipedalia verba,"

could not but be familiar to you: but you were not in the predicament of the poor heroes of the poet; your poverty was only of the mind, your loſſes only thoſe of reputation; with the inſolence which often accompanies the firſt, and with that callouſneſs of mind which the latter could not reach, you retained the " *ampullas et ſeſquipedalia verba*" ſtill.

But men of more ſerious and conſiderate minds lamented your misfortunes as connected with thoſe of your country, and pitied you when they thought how poignantly, on that account, you muſt feel them. They ſuppoſed you ſuffering every hardſhip incident to your ill-fated army, trebled to you by the reflection of having yourſelf been the principal cauſe of their diſaſters. They pictured you viſiting the wounded, the ſick, the dying, with all the anguiſh of the chief, as well as the ſympathy of a man miniſtring aſſiſtance and comfort where you could, or at leaſt affording them that conſolation which ſoldiers always feel when their leader participates their diſtreſſes. What were our feelings when we ſaw you arrive in England! when we had underſtood that you had left your unhappy followers, the remains of that brave army which had ſo often bled under your command, ſtarving on the barren frontiers of Virginia, while you lived daintily at the tables of your noble friends, diſplayed your white teeth, and read your

your little verſes in the Ruelles of Pall-mall and Piccadilly, or enjoyed at your eaſe the "Green Delights" of the Oaks, which your ſportive muſe was then contriving to celebrate!

All this, Sir, admitted but of one palliation; that vacancy or diſſipation of mind, which does not liſten to the voice of honourable fame, or of honeſt cenſure. But in the late inſtance which I have mentioned above, you have ſhown that this was a miſtake. You have ſtated yourſelf a critic in military duty, and laid down principles for its extent and regulation. But when, in your acrimonious charge againſt Captain Williams, you applied the word *murther* to the execution of a ſingle villain like Muſtapha, had you thought of any term to expreſs the abandonment of thouſands of innocent Americans to the Indian tomahawk? Had you forgotten a proclamation, in which the only thing its bombaſtic obſcurity left intelligible was the bloody proſcription which it authoriſed? Poets have been often ſuppoſed to paint from their own reſemblance, to transfuſe their own ſentiments into the perſons of their dramas; thence I ſuppoſe it is, that we hear from you diſſertations on humanity in war, and from your friend Mr. Sheridan eulogiums on public integrity and economy.

The perſon who now addreſſes you, Sir, is no party-writer, and this is the firſt time he ever correſponded with a News-paper; but *facit indignatio verſus.*" Amidſt the quiet of his diſtant reſidence, he ſtill feels for that country which your former temerity diſgraced, and for that innocent individual,

(as

(as he in his conſcience believes him) whom you would now ſacrifice to the pride of your eloquence, or the virulence of your party. When the injuſtice of that party is loud enough to reach him in his retirement, he cannot help reſenting it on behalf of the injured. He knows the ridiculouſneſs of egotiſm almoſt as well as you, Sir; but he may be allowed to aſſume ſome importance for his ſentiments, when he knows them to be the ſentiments of every worthy and reſpectable man in the country. If you or your friends again provoke his honeſt indignation, you may again hear from

BRUTUS.

April 16th, 1790.

LETTER

LETTER II.

To R. B. S———, *Esq.*

SIR,

IT is the boaſt of our free government, that neither great wealth nor diſtinguiſhed rank are neceſſary to obtain or to enjoy the higheſt honours of the ſtate; that abilities and integrity are requiſites ſufficient for the attainment of all to which ambition can aſpire, unſupported by any blazon but the public applauſe, and reſting on no title but the opinion of the people.

This wiſely democratic principle of our conſtitution, like all other wiſe and good principles, is liable to abuſe. Demagogues have frequently ariſen, who have been lifted by the tide of popularity into heights of which they were unworthy; who have miſled the public into the applauſe or cenſure of meaſures, not from their merit or demerit, but as thoſe meaſures were friendly or adverſe to the intereſted views of thoſe leaders of the multitude. Adventurers have ariſen in Parliament, whoſe aſſurance ſupplies the want of information, and whoſe powers in debate cover their weakneſs and ſophiſtry in argument. There are ſpeakers, as well as ſoldiers, of fortune; and the firſt, like the latter, are ready to undertake any ſervice, however deſperate, by which they may puſh themſelves into Preferment.

Under

Under this deſcription, Sir, if you ſhall be claſſed, you may boaſt at leaſt of a ſomewhat honourable introduction. Your wit, and the gaiety, if not the graces of your manner, attracted the notice and conciliated the favour of a faſhionable circle, who foſtered the projects of your ambition, while they liſted you under the banners of their party. Ladies are quick in their concluſions, and look not deeply into conſequences: When the fair Dutcheſs made you member for Stafford, ſhe only thought of the bon mots ſhe had heard you utter, of the comic ſcenes with which your Muſe had delighted her. Her Grace was younger than Hecuba, and had no old woman's dream, like Hecuba's, of bringing forth a fire-brand.

You have had the merit, Sir, of making more of the advantages which this accidental patronage had given you, than the moſt ſanguine of your admirers could have ventured to ſuppoſe. Habit and perſeverance have conquered the original ſtiffneſs of your manner, and the heſitation of your utterance. The natural livelineſs of your imagination and brilliancy of your wit, furniſhed you with imagery to ſeduce the paſſions, and ridicule to excite the mirth of your audience; and you ſuperadded to thoſe willing endowments of your nature the occaſional exertions of ſtudy, attention, calculation, and enquiry, which your indolence and love of pleaſure muſt have rendered irkſome to you. Your induſtry has ſought out ſubjects of debate, as well as weapons of argument. You courted the *Scots Reform*, a Drab who was willing to be won, and whoſe turbulent ſpirit was congenial to your own. You wooed the Weſt India

India merchants, who rather coyly refuſed your addreſſes, from an idea, perhaps, (for it is not eaſy to conceive the verſatility of your talents) that ſo determined a champion of freedom could not poſſibly harangue againſt the emancipation of the negroes. You wedded the tobacconiſts, and ſealed your contract by a five hours ſpeech on ſo trite a ſubject as the extenſion of the Exciſe. From theſe, and other ſuch ſincere and patriotic exertions, your flatterers have wove for you a kind of a civic crown, and given you a title highly honourable in a commercial country, 'the Tradeſman's Friend.' You have revived the old Roman connexion of *patron* and *client:* like the orators of old, your clients the tradeſmen beſet your door of a morning; they would bring too, after the Roman cuſtom, their preſents, but they have already beſtowed them; for you have taken care that every thing you have received from them has been a preſent, if every thing is a preſent that is not paid for.

Thoſe tradeſmen who have entered into this bond of *friendſhip* with you, are not perhaps aware of all its privileges. You had friends in the *Opera:* let them aſk Mr. Taylor; he is now at liberty (you will pardon the pun) to tell the value of ſuch a friend. You had friends in the *Theatre*; if ever Dr. Ford's creditors allow him to return from abroad, he can inform them of the advantages to be derived from your friendſhip. Your friendſhip to the tradeſmen is on the ſame ſide of the account; only, in the language of arithmeticians, it is of a higher denomination.

Theſe, however, were private connections, which perhaps are beneath the notice of the public. But you have ſome friendſhips of a higher kind, which involved objects the moſt important and momentous, the dignity of the Monarch, the welfare of the people. The effect of ſuch a connection we are entitled to trace, and it is probable your pride will be flattered while we trace it. You derived this, like other diſtinctions, from a female title; and, had it been exerciſed only on female ſubjects, the *petits ſoupers* of C——n or C————d Houſe, or had it only regulated the buſineſs of Brooks's or Newmarket, we ſhould have looked on it as one of thoſe trivial connexions, thoſe 'humours of his idleneſs,' which, though ſerious men might regret, it were rather cynical to blame. But you were almoſt the ſingle member of his cabinet, when ſubjects of the higheſt moment were agitated; ſubjects, that were to mark his character as ſon, a p—e, and citizen. With eaſy natures, and at a certain time of life, to be counſelled is to be governed; you are therefore reſponſible for the conduct of your illuſtrious friend in all theſe characters.

As to *filial* obligations, I am willing to allow, that from your own mind or conduct you could not eaſily draw conceptions of their force; but poſſeſſing the imagination of a poet, you might have created a character you never felt, and made your friend ſomewhat a different ſon to a father more indulgent than yours.

In a public capacity it were an irkſome and ungracious taſk to retrace that conduct which you prompted,

prompted, and would recall to our remembrance a period of national fear and uneaſineſs which, we hope, no future time will equal. There were, however, ſome advantages derived from thoſe evils. Virtues and talents were diſplayed on which the people could build future truſt; on both ſides were ſuch virtues and talents exhibited; the D. of P—d, with an integrity and a ſpirit worthy of his high character, ſhewed that there were conditions on which he would not ſtoop to hold the higheſt ſtation of the empire.

In this intended firſt public act of adminiſtration, in which "your little bark was to ſail attendant, was to

"Purſue the triumph, and partake the gale,"

it was not the money which the people regarded: to have paid your debts as an individual was a calculable expence on the revenue; but to have paid them as the debts of a copartnery, was as humiliating as it was corrupt, and led to an idea of connection, of which the danger could not be calculated. It has been the faſhion of late to make alluſions from a great ancient to a great modern name; and the hero of *Agincourt* has been quoted in vindication of youthful levities which maturer age is to cure. Have you had no part in this dramatic alluſion? "Rob me the Exchequer the firſt thing you do." But you have leſs comedy in your figure, and more ſerioufneſs in your deſigns than *Falſtaff*; and therefore ſuch an advice from you excited graver emotions. Ih e ſociety of diſſipation, a young man riſks more than his money; he ſtakes his feeling, his principle, his ſenſe of private virtue, and of public duty.

But you are ſkilful in the ridicule of ſentiment, and will perhaps laugh at this as the cant of hypocriſy. But no—you have of late aſſumed that tone yourſelf, and have *preached* from the Manager's box in Weſtminſter-Hall, and from your place in the Houſe of Commons. In Weſtminſter-Hall, indeed, your ſpeeches were exhibitions merely; and when you declaimed againſt ambition, venality, and the filial inhumanity of the *Begum's* ſon, we conceived no more relation between the ſpeech and the ſpeaker, than when mild Mr. *Benſley* perſonates a murderer, or honeſt Mr. *Parſons* repreſents a pickpocket. But do not carry this matter too far. An *eſtabliſhment* of virtues is expenſive, and may puzzle even you to keep. In the Houſe of Commons, and applied perſonally to yourſelf, you muſt beware of talking ſo much of the danger of lotteries and gaming, and of the conſciouſneſs of honour, of principle, and of virtue. I know you don't allow much penetration to the country gentlemen; but they have memories, and know the meaning of thoſe old-faſhioned country vocables. Be adviſed, Sir, to ſafer pretenſions. Shut up your virtues, like green houſe plants, to expand only in ſunſhine; lock them up, as your friends the tradeſmen do their bills, to be diſcharged in more fortunate times. Keep your purity and honour for the *Secretaryſhip at War;* or preſerve your integrity and economy for the *Treaſurerſhip of the Navy.*

BRUTUS.

May 3d, 1790.

LETTER

LETTER III.

To the Right Hon. E. B——.

SIR,

PARTY-WRITERS have ſo accuſtomed us to expect abuſe in addreſſes of this ſort, that I am obliged to preface this letter with a declaration, that I am more an admirer of your good qualities than an obſerver of your failings. In the diſtant retirement of private life, political opinions are mellowed into ſpeculative mildneſs, and do not riſe in our boſoms with that perſonal acrimony which ſets down a man's character merely from his party. Though I feel with, I believe, a very great majority of my fellow-citizens, much reſpect and gratitude to men againſt whom you have been long in oppoſition, yet I am neither blind to their imperfections nor to your merits. When their imperfections ſhall appear to diminiſh their uſefulneſs to the public, I will ſpeak my opinion with the ſame regret with which I have ſeen your merits rendered uſeleſs or hurtful to it. I feel for my country, Sir; and I am grieved when, on either ſide, virtues or talents are loſt to its ſervice, or miſapplied to its prejudice.

In my ſenſe of your merits, Sir, I own I indulge a certain degree of vanity. It is not a vulgar mind

they

they can affect or attach. You have been unfortunate in the exertion of your talents: poſſeſſing popular virtues and popular abilities, your public conduct and public appearances have but ſeldom won the ſuffrages of the people. There was a refinement in your virtue, an abſtraction in your eloquence, which it required ſomething of a philoſopher and a ſcholar to reliſh; plain men denied the one, and did not always underſtand the other. Hence, perhaps, aroſe the ridiculous fable of your education at *St. Omer's*, and your being deſigned for a member of a religious order ſome time ago aboliſhed in the greateſt part of Europe; a ſtory which had leſs foundation than almoſt any other in the mythology of the vulgar. You had the genius and the learning, but you wanted the prudence and the addreſs of the Society of *Jeſus*. They contrived to work upon mankind by the dextrous management of ordinary powers: you loſt men by the miſmanagement of great and uncommon endowments.

From the time of *Swift* downwards, the remark of the ſuperior fitneſs of coarſe and ordinary minds to the plain operations of buſineſs, has been often repeated. In the Houſe of Commons, which you early choſe for the field of your ambition, the ſame thing takes place: there is often a point below eloquence at which men muſt ſtand who would wiſh to perſuade or to lead that aſſembly. That in this buſineſs-kind of ſpeaking you ſhould not greatly excel; that you ſhould not always conjoin accuracy of deduction with fertility of invention, nor be as clear in a ſtatement of figures as glowing in an appeal to the

the paſſions, is what we naturally expect from the different formation of different minds. There are few, very few men indeed, the variety of whoſe powers can accommodate itſelf to the ſenſe of the plain, the calculations of the plodding, the vivacity of the fanciful; whoſe language has perſpicuity for the dulleſt underſtanding, and brilliancy for the moſt lively imagination; whoſe ſpeeches have demonſtration for the reaſoner and logician, and flow for the ears of the vacant and the thoughtleſs. Theſe are endowments which Nature beſtows but ſeldom, though ſhe happens to have gifted with them each of the preſent leaders of the oppoſite parties in parliament.

But it was not only from the abſtractions of philoſophy or the refinements of learning that you diſguſted your audience; it was often from an intemperance which philoſophy ſhould have reſtrained, from a groſſneſs which learning ſhould have corrected. In the courſe of the proſecution againſt Mr. H———, you treſpaſſed equally againſt juſtice, humanity, and decorum. Surely, Sir, the moral and elegant ſyſtems in which you are ſo converſant, ſhould have ſuggeſted the impropriety of that conduct which you and ſome of your brother managers adopted. Mr. H——— ſtood before them a priſoner, under that protection which an obligation to ſilent ſufferance ſhould have afforded him with generous minds. His accuſers were inveſted with a high character, the repreſentatives of the Commons of Great Britain: the tribunal they addreſſed conſiſted (abſtractly ſpeaking) of every thing that was venerable

venerable and auguſt. Was that a place for rancour or ſcurrility, for ribaldry or railing? You, Sir, in particular, had the calm dignity to ſupport of one who ſought to aſſert the rights of mankind, to vindicate the honour of Engliſhmen. You came not there in the ſituation of ſome of your colleagues, to wipe away the impeachment of vice in themſelves by the declamation of virtue; to obliterate the memory of diſhoneſty by eulogiums on honour, and to take from public miſchief and diſſenſion that general chance of advantage which deſperate incendiaries hope for amidſt the conflagration they have raiſed. It may perhaps wound your peculiar and allowable pride, to be accuſed of as much want of taſte as of compaſſion or propriety. You reverſed the well-known compliment to *Virgil*, who was ſaid "to toſs about his dung with majeſty;" you borrowed her flowers from rhetoric, and, ſoiling them with ordure, threw them in the faces of your noble and venerable judicature, of your high-bred and beautiful auditory. I leave out of this account all doubts of the juſtice of your charge, becauſe I give you credit for a belief of its juſtice. Yet in doing ſo, I fear I muſt deduct as much from your penetration as I allow to your integrity. How elſe ſhould it happen that the only objects of your perſecution have been thoſe who have ſucceſsfully ſerved their country; that your blind humanity ſhould have champion'd itſelf in the cauſe of the cheats of *St. Euſtatia*, and the blackguards of Bengal; againſt men who had ſaved the Britiſh poſſeſſions in both Indies from the ruin and diſgrace which ſome of your friends had ſuffered to overwhelm them in other parts of the world?

Moderate

Moderate men, who know and value you, are aſtoniſhed at the vehemence of your ſtile, and the violence of your conduct in public, when they compare it with that candour and that gentleneſs which conciliate ſo many friends to you in private. But it needs leſs metaphyſical knowledge than you poſſeſs, leſs knowledge of life than my age has taught me, to account for this phenomenon. When the mind is imbued with a particular turn of thinking which it has indulged into a habit; with the audience that rouſes, the exertion that warms, the party that inflames; againſt all theſe circumſtances combined, it requires more ſoundneſs of judgment than men of your genius are commonly bleſſed with, to keep the juſt and even balance of conduct and demeanour: yet humanity ſhould never leave us, becauſe in a good man it is that inſtinctive principle which nothing ſhould overpower for a moment. There was a time, Sir, when you forgot its call; a remarkable period, when diſtreſs and infirmity were ſeen in ſuch elevated place, that the viſitation of heaven was marked with national awe and depreſſion. I forbear to recal the general indignation, or to raiſe the bluſh on your own cheek which a repetition of the expreſſions you then uſed muſt occaſion. For this alſo you wanted the apology ſome others might have pleaded; you knew the tenderneſs of a parent, the comforts of a family, the connexion of a worthy and honourable ſociety. You had not abandoned your heart to play, nor lived a wretched dependent on the proſtitution of character, on the wreck of principle. But you had leaſed out your

humanity to faction! Party-rage had ſtifled your natural ſenſibility, and you forgot the man in the monarch. Yet they who are willing to blame you will quote that parade of feeling which you detailed for the misfortunes of Aſiatic princes, of whom the names and deſcription threw a ridicule over the pomp of your pity. I will anſwer, ſince I have no better apology, that here alſo it was the rage of party ſtill.

The rage of party, Sir, is unworthy of your talents, and unbecoming your character. It levels your genius and your virtue with men whoſe petulance undervalues the firſt, whoſe profligacy ridicules the latter. In my reſpect for virtue, in my pride of letters, I cannot bear the advantage which, on this ground, the diſſipated, the worthleſs, the ignorant have over you. Reſume the place which nature, education, your own ſentiments, and the ſentiments of good men would aſſign you. Do not peeviſhly (as I have ſometimes heard you propoſe) retire from that poſt in which you may ſtill be uſeful to your country. We have not, amidſt our recollection of ſome weak or cenſurable appearances, forgotten the merit of your better exertions. With the force of a ſcholar's ſtile, with the richneſs of a poet's imagination, you have formerly, and may again correct the errors or expoſe the abuſes of public meaſures. Be but juſt to yourſelf, to your talents, to your fame. You have lived long enough to contention and cabal. I ſpeak, Sir, with the ſympathy of a coeval. The ſtruggle for place, the bickerings of faction, are at no time very dignified occupations;

occupations; but at our time of life, and to a man like you, they are particularly degrading; when againſt the paltry emoluments, or trifling diſtinctions of a few joyleſs years, they ſtake the happineſs of preſent peace of mind, and the reputation of future ages.

BRUTUS.

May 12th, 1790.

LETTER IV.

To H. R. H. the P. of W——.

SIR,

IN abſolute monarchies, all communication of ſentiment between the Sovereign and the people is cut off by the terrors of deſpotiſm. Perſonal familiarity, indeed, the Prince may allow to a few favoured individuals, more ſafely than in freer governments, becauſe the diſtance of political ſituation prevents all danger of that want of reverence and reſpect which is fatal to dignity. In monarchies more limited, the Sovereign and his family rely on the confidence and affection of the people; a fealty of a more generous and valuable kind, which the higher rank deſerves by its virtues, and the lower yields from a reaſonable and independent conviction of them. Flattery it is in the power of ſlaves to beſtow, but fame is the gift only of freemen.

When I advance theſe truths to a Prince of the Houſe of *Brunſwick*, I cannot be in danger of his diſpleaſure; and I know too well the peculiar condeſcenſion of him whom I now take the liberty of addreſſing to doubt his acceptance of that honeſt tribute which I offer him, of approbation mixed with counſel, of attachment to his perſon and his family, joined to a wiſh and a hope that his conduct

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may always deſerve it. With a peculiar complacency of diſpoſition you have thrown aſide the diſtance of rank and the reſerve of royalty; you have opened not only the actions of your public, but the habits of your private life, to the view of the people; and diſdaining to impoſe on them by the weight of your name or the parade of your dignity, have conciliated their affections by the charms of your appearance and the graces of your manner. If there has been ſometimes a ſmall degree of error or exceſs in this affability and condeſcenſion, we are diſpoſed rather to regret than to cenſure it: we regret the accident of its miſapplication, but we are not inclined to blame the exerciſe of it in you. The ſunſhine that gives to the breeze its health and to the fields their verdure, breeds at the ſame time the uſeleſs weed and noxious exhalation. We complain of the weed and the exhalation, but he muſt be a peeviſh miſanthrope indeed who quarrels with the ſunſhine.

Sober reaſoners, however, may perhaps diſpute the juſtice of my ſimile; they will tell us of the difference between the ſeeming imperfections of the natural, and the real imperfections of the moral world, and point out the latter as ſubjects of correction and amendment, which it is the province of wiſdom to diſcover and of goodneſs to remove. In the inſtance alluded to, your talents are equal to the diſcovery, and your prudence as well as virtue, they truſt, will prompt the correction. There are perſons on whom your favour and friendſhip are beſtowed, whom, even amidſt the adulation with which it is the misfortune of princes to be deceived, you will

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eaſily diſcover to be unworthy of that favour and friendſhip. You have mixed enough with the world to be able to judge of men; and, in this country, the channel of public opinion is ſufficiently open to the higheſt perſonages, even without the advantage of your acceſſibility to obtain it. The people have too much reverence for your name to apply their common traditionary adages to the effects of ſociety upon character; but though the communication may not hurt you, it affects the public, doubly affects it, if the unworthy are brought forward into place and diſtinction, and the deſerving excluded from ſtations which they ought to have filled.

We know, Sir, at the ſame time, and make allowance for that ſociety which naturally faſtens itſelf on a young man's freer hours; and do not expect that, amidſt amuſement or feſtivity, there ſhould always be an unexceptionable ſelection of his companions or his gueſts. There is a diſtinction which will readily be made between that circle with which men of high rank and important ſtations unbend their leiſure, and that with which they truſt their ſerious moments. "Nobody, ſaid the Frenchman, is a hero to his *valet de chambre*;" and he who ſhould attempt it would be very little of a hero to any one elſe. But the valet de chambre who dreſſes, or the idle companion who amuſes a great man, are mere appendages of his private dreſſing-room or parlour, with whom, if they keep in their proper place, the public has nothing to do, and after whom it will never inquire. But if they coun-

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ſel him in important affairs, if they lead him in momentous or delicate ſituations, he muſt be accountable for his miſplaced and prepoſterous attachment, and the public which it injures will be entitled to complain of its effects. Nothing has been more fatal to princes than this predilection for weak and unworthy men; and the hiſtory of mankind is one continued leſſon of the danger to greatneſs in being made the dupe of its private attachments, when they are not reſtrained by prudence nor regulated by virtue.

The annals of our own country are not ſilent on that ſubject. You, Sir, I believe, have heard them quoted in excuſe, if not in compliment, of ſome youthful levities for which the good-humour of Engliſhmen is glad to find an apology. *Eaſtcheap* has been cited for the credit of *Parliament-ſtreet*, and *Gadſhill* drawn into precedent for the honour of *Newmarket:* but if there is any ſcholiaſt on *Shakeſpeare* who has the *entreé* to your library, let him not forget the expreſſion of "*unyoked* idleneſs" which the youthful *Henry* indulged with his aſſociates. There was an extravagance in the pranks of *Falſtaffe* and *Poins* that might impeach the dignity, but did not taint the character of their illuſtrious companion. The excurſive ſallies of the Prince were made into the regions of abſurdity, foreign to that place which his birth entitled him to hold, or thoſe duties which it called on him to perform; his follies hung upon him like a maſquing dreſs which the mummery of the hour put on, and the ſerious occupations of his own perſon and character laid

laid aſide. Your companions, Sir, if not all of a higher rank than *Harry Monmouth's*, had in general deeper and more important deſigns. They did not, amid the jovialty of wine or the gaiety of pleaſure, doff the cares of life, or mock the toils of ambition. Theirs was not always the honeſt, joyous vacancy of thoughtleſs mirth; like the *Athenian* heroes, beneath the roſes of the feaſt they hid the arms of their ambition; but they did not, like the Athenian heroes, uſe them againſt the *enemies* of their country.

One particular juncture there was which might have afforded an apology for men of leſs foreſight than them, to think of uſing the connection which youth and inexperience had formed to purpoſes of intereſt and advancement; when the diadem hovered over the head of their patron, and when indeed, but for ſome error in their political meaſures, its power and authority might have been his. That juncture was attended with circumſtances of ſo extraordinary a kind as to form an æra in the political hiſtory of the kingdom. When diſeaſe and infirmity invaded the throne, the diſtreſs of the Sovereign was felt as a private calamity, which intereſted the feelings of every individual, without relation to his political rights, or the political intereſts of the community; not only the loyalty of ſubjects, but the affection, the ſympathy of men were excited by this calamity. In this calamity they looked to you, Sir, with feelings of a ſimilar kind, ready to acknowledge the public merits of the Prince, or the private virtues of the ſon. In diſtreſs, men's hearts

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are eaſily won: if you failed to win them, it muſt have been owing to ſome imprudence in that ſurrounding circle, through the medium of whoſe character the characters of princes are always ſeen. It could not be owing to any fault in your own diſpoſition, gracious at all times, and then peculiarly called on to exerciſe the beſt qualities of your nature—kindneſs, compaſſion, filial attention, and filial reverence. The thoughtleſs and unprincipled diſſipation of ſome of that circle, might have, at ſuch a period, been ſuppoſed to watch the bed of ſickneſs with malignant expectation, to ſcoff at the diſtreſs of thoſe around it, and to make matter for wretched and ſcurril jeſts of the moſt ſevere of all human afflictions. In a public view, they might have been ſuppoſed to have catched, with a blind and rapacious eagerneſs, this opportunity of gratifying their avarice or ambition; in the triumph of ſudden elevation, to have forgot decency; and, in the inſolence of anticipated power, to have deſpiſed moderation. Bankrupt alike in fortune and in character, ſome of them might have been imagined capable of every extremity to which deſperate circumſtances and determined profligacy might excite; and have nothing to loſe, and nothing to feel with the country, to have been equally unreſtrained by prudence and by ſentiment.

Your ſentiments, Sir, and your deportment, we knew by our own. Struck with the ſolemn melancholy of the national diſtreſs, you felt it doubled in your own individual affliction. At the age when feeling is acute, when intereſt and ambition have hardly learned the value of their objects, you thought

leſs of the public dignity to which this calamitous event might call you, than of the private ſorrow by which it was to be accompanied. Of political opinions, you adopted the moſt temperate; of political meaſures, you propoſed the leaſt violent: you did not wiſh to add to the depreſſion of the public by the fear of ſudden change, or the dread of civil diſſenſion. You knew that the influence and power which a different conduct might obtain were as unſafe to a prudent, as diſagreeable to a good mind; that in the oppoſite ſcale were placed every thing that wiſdom or virtue in a Prince could deſire; all the confidence, the love, the glory, which a generous people could offer to his acceptance.

To the joy of the nation, as to yours, Sir, this calamity "overpaſſed us like a ſummer cloud," and our fears were loſt before we could well aſcertain them. The country was freed from a ſituation of uncertainty and of danger that ſhook its credit and its quiet, and you were left, we hope, (and we know you hope) many years longer to the exerciſe of thoſe engaging and amiable qualities that are hardly allowed to expand under the weight and preſſure of ſtate affairs.

In your preſent ſituation, Sir, you have many opportunities, which we are perſuaded you will improve, of rendering eſſential ſervice to your country. Your favour and example can encourage genuine patriotiſm, can promote public honour and public virtue; without the reſponſibility of official power, your patronage can call merit into action, and prompt the rewards of its exertions. Keep but

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the purity of your influence unſullied, preſerve its dignity unimpaired, and you can weave the civic crown for the ſtateſman, and his laurel wreath for the ſoldier.

In former times, of which ſome curious records are left us, the heir-apparent of the Crown has been induced to lend himſelf to a factious cabal, to become a king of the "ſhreds and patches" of Oppoſition, who proſtituted his name to their own little purpoſes, who abuſed his confidence, and made a vile ſtewardſhip of his weakneſs for their own private advantage. To ſuch arts greatneſs muſt always be liable; and it is, perhaps, rather a compliment to your good-nature than an impeachment on your underſtanding, if we venture to caution you againſt them. In your ſituation you cannot know their effects; you cannot ſee them as we do in diſtant provinces, and amidſt the maſs of the people. You know not what deſpicable aſſociates the *Creſſy* ſtandard aſſembles, over what impurities the plumage of your creſt is made to wave; yet popular prejudice will often lay theſe abuſes to your charge, though in that encouragement, to which the eaſineſs of your nature allows them, you cannot foreſee the miſchiefs they produce. The nobleſt tree of the foreſt is not always ſhaken by the winds, or ſcathed by the lightning of heaven; it ſuffers, ignobly ſuffers, from the vermin that ſhelter at its root.

In a private capacity, your humility will not probably allow you to ſuppoſe how much is in your power for the manners and the happineſs of the community. With the advantages you derive from nature, with the accompliſhments you have received

from education, you have for ſome time been acknowledged

" The glaſs of faſhion and the mold of form ;"

and there is a ſort of dominion annexed to this idea, which, though of a lighter kind, is of greater extent and importance than ſome others which men are more ſolicitous to poſſeſs. I am no Cynic preacher, and will not ſuppoſe that, at your time of life, and with your temperament you are to regulate your conduct and deportment by the rules of cold-blooded age and ſober wiſdom. But there is a decorum in pleaſure, a temperance even in diſſipation, which, amidſt all the extravagance of the moment, marks the feeling of a man of ſenſe and a gentleman; a ſomething even about his idleſt indulgences which ſpeaks the folly to belong to him, and not him to the folly. The words, *gentleman* and *man of faſhion*, will borrow their meaning, within a certain circle, from you; but there is an intrinſic ſenſe of the terms which will ſtill be the underſtanding of the people. Conſider, Sir, that, with all the witchery of your manners and addreſs, the ſphere of your attraction is limited, the ſphere of your fame extenſive. Sacrifice a little to the judgment, or, if your gayer friends will call it ſo, the prejudice of thoſe whoſe judgment is one day to be ſo important to you. Remember that no power, even in the moſt arbitrary governments, was ever equal to his who could wield at will the *opinions* of his ſubjects.

BRUTUS.

May 21ſt, 1790.

LETTER

LETTER V.

To the Right Hon. C. J. F——.

SIR,

THE irregularities of genius have been ſo often obſerved that it has at length become almoſt proverbial to aſſociate a want of prudence with the poſſeſſion of a brilliant imagination. We eaſily pardon in others, and excuſe in ourſelves, an eccentricity of conduct which we ſuppoſe connected with the warmth of feeling or the energies of fancy, and ſet down propriety and diſcretion as homely qualities, to be valued, perhaps, but not to be envied.

If brilliancy of talents could excuſe their miſdirection, you, Sir, of all men living, might plead that apology. The variety of powers with which your mind is endowed; the extent of your knowledge, with the vivacity of your imagination; the logical cloſeneſs of your reaſoning, with that overwhelming torrent of eloquence in which it is conveyed; the rapidity of your thought, with the accuracy of your perception; the intuitive and lightning glance of your own obſervation, with your juſt and clear conception of that of others—altogether form a combination which aſtoniſhes equally and delights the obſerver.

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But it is by the application, rather than the poſſeſſion of abilities, that men are uſeful or reſpectable in life; and this maxim holds particularly true with regard to public men, to whom diſcretion in the conduct of their talents is more abſolutely eſſential than to others, in proportion to the extent of their influence, and the importance as well as delicacy of the ſituations in which they are placed. In the courſe of your political life, Sir, ſuch ſituations have been uncommonly frequent; and it was highly favourable to the celebrity as well as to the developement of your abilities, that they roſe in a period more eventful than almoſt any other in the annals of Great Britain, or in the hiſtory of Europe.

In thoſe ſituations, Sir, the public has not perhaps always done juſtice to your conduct. In the national temper of England there is a downright openneſs and good-nature, which allows much to purity of intention, which pardons many errors in its reſpect for general good character; while, on the other hand, it is always diſpoſed to detract from abilities or ſucceſs, if unaccompanied with theſe eſtimable qualities. Your great opponent, ſo long (alas! much too long) in adminiſtration, poſſeſſed the virtues of temperament, which, though they were often vices to his country, its generoſity truſted and approved; and it looked with complacency on his amiable domeſtic character, to which the tenor of your life, and the complexion of your ſociety, were known to be adverſe. Your oppoſition to him was ſuppoſed to be grounded on perſonal reſentment. Your oppoſition to his meaſures was attributed only

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to the turbulence of faction. The public had juſt begun to feel his demerits, when your coalition with him took place; a coalition which the people felt as individuals, and could not, in the antipathy of that feeling, allow for party-combination or political expediency. You ſuffered thus alike from their indulgence and their cenſure of that unfortunate miniſter; and they grave credit to the juſtice of your former accuſations againſt him, only at that moment when your ill-ſorted junction laid you under the mortifying neceſſity of retracting them. But on the ſubject of Lord N—— the public indignation has ceaſed, and we will not awaken it; though we may be allowed, with a retroſpective ſigh for national diſaſter, or a ſmile at national credulity, to wonder that ſo weak an agent could occaſion ſo giant a miſchief to his country. That country, in its wonted good-nature, and with a certain reverence for misfortune and infirmity, of which he has not always ſhewn them an example, has allowed his age to remain unqueſtioned; has left him undiſturbed to the quietiſm of his nature, if haply it may ſooth the pangs of recollection, or blunt the dread of that obloquy with which poſterity will cover his name. Or perhaps he owes much of this indulgence to the circumſtance of being ſo fortunate in a ſucceſſor—"*Deus nobis hæc otia fecit.*" We are unwilling to diſturb the preſent proſperity of the nation with a recollection of its diſtreſſes, or of thoſe wretched miniſters by whom they were occaſioned.

From this natural and commendable propenſity in the people to enhance or to leſſen the public merits

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of men according to their private diſpoſitions, or private character, you have ſuffered a diſadvantage which has counterbalanced all your natural endowments, and all your acquired information, great and extraordinary as we are willing to admit them. It is not ſufficient for you to anſwer, that much of the blame imputed to you in this reſpect is unjuſt and ill-founded; for your friends to tell us of the candour of mind, the benevolence of your heart, the warmth and diſintereſtedneſs of your friendſhip. Did the public give them credit for their aſſertions, it would ſtill reply, Why waſte thoſe qualities on objects ſo improper? why degrade them by an aſſociation with men ſo unworthy? But the public is general in its concluſions, and cannot eaſily ſuppoſe particular exceptions to rules which experience has eſtabliſhed. The people look to that circle of which you form a part, and involve you in that general colour it aſſumes to their eye. They cannot couple diſſipation and buſineſs, and do not eaſily aſſociate deep gaming and ſcrupulous integrity. Some of your friends publicly diſclaim gaming, and are content to cheat without it: You play with that gentleman-like fairneſs which marks every part of your conduct; yet with the million, thoſe friends of yours have the merit of their abſtinence from play, while you derive none from that honour with which your indulgence in play is accompanied. The profeſſion of play, like every other profeſſion againſt which public virtue or public prejudice is armed, ſubjects to the general obloquy of the calling every individual, however honourably he may exerciſe it. Nor is it often

often that this general opinion of the public is erroneous; *imputed* degradation is commonly productive of the *real;* and an aſſociation with the mean or the worthleſs, if it does not corrupt us into vice, will at leaſt blunt our feelings of virtue.

Some of your acquaintance will ſmile at the word *virtue*, when applied to political ſituation: but this is not the cant of fanaticiſm; it is the voice of truth and of reaſon, and a miniſter of England muſt hear and obey it. It is for the honour of our country that even private moral rectitude goes ſo much to the credit of public men, that we can ſcarce recollect a popular miniſter who was not poſſeſſed, or ſuppoſed to be poſſeſſed of it. But there are certain virtues that may be termed *miniſterial*, which a ſtateſman muſt poſſeſs in order to be truſted. Induſtry, attention, integrity, and economy, are qualities eſſential to his ſituation; and though it is poſſible that he may take them up, as he does the ſeals of his office, for the public uſe merely, while in his private capacity he never thinks of exerciſing them; yet the people will hardly confide in this occaſional conformity, but will rather ſuppoſe that the habits of his life will outweigh the duties of the hour, and the bonds of his ſociety be ſtronger than the obligations of his buſineſs. The few who are acquainted with the force of the pliability of his mind, may conceive him to be above the debaſement of his ordinary occupations, or the contagion of his favourite company; but the public imagination is leſs ductile, and will not ſo ſuddenly loſe the irreverent ideas it has formed of a man's private manners and private connexions.

You will eaſily apply theſe general poſitions, Sir; you applied them indeed, already, during the ſhort time you and your friends were in adminiſtration; you aſſumed the grave and ſerious deportment which you knew was ſuitable to your office; you put on the externals of decorum with ſcrupulous attention; but the public opinion was refractory, and we did not truſt our ſight againſt the conviction of our underſtanding. The ſolemn ſuit and its dignified appendages only recalled to our remembrance the blue frock and the familiar rattan; and we ſaw ſtill at your ſide ſome perſons who were only entitled to be there from their participation of thoſe looſer hours in which ſurely nothing was to be acquired that could fit men for the high offices of the State. We regretted this in your former, and feared it in your future advancement. Unleſs divorced from your former connexions, you muſt have riſen into power, as the vulgar ſuppoſe of comets, with a noxious atmoſphere around you, to blight the credit of the ſtate, and to taint the purity of public adminiſtration.

The miniſter of a great empire has other opinions to gain beſides thoſe of his own countrymen. The credit of Britain is one of the proudeſt circumſtances in the compariſon between her and the ſurrounding nations. You know, Sir, for you were abroad at a critical juncture, the effect which the virtue of a miniſter has on that credit: they are polite on the Continent; and it might poſſibly not reach *your* ears how much that credit might be leſſened by his vices or his diſſipation.

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I am afraid you have thrown away your talents, as well as ſullied your reputation, by your adherence to men who were often as unfortunate in the objects they purſued as in the conduct they held. You have exhibited your eloquence with the dexterity of a prize-fighter rather than the dignity of a champion for truth; owing, perhaps, to that ſituation in which you had the misfortune to be placed, the moſt admirable of its exertions oftener pleaſed than perſuaded, oftener aſtoniſhed than pleaſed. You indulged a ſubtlety in argument which ſometimes vanquiſhed your adverſaries in debate; but, like other barren conqueſts, rather gained an increaſe of glory than an extent of power. Your audience contrived to ſeparate the debater from the man, and laviſhed its applauſe on the firſt, without beſtowing its commendation on the latter.

This letter, Sir, is addreſſed to you by one who is of no party but that of truth; who is attached to no intereſts but thoſe of his country. Did perſonal attachment or acquaintance weigh with him, he has known you enough to be faſcinated by your ſociety, and has felt the chilling virtue and unconciliating pride of ſome of your opponents. He calls to you "with a friendly voice," for the ſake of his country, to which your wonderful talents have been hitherto almoſt unproductive. In modern men of your rank, talents, any ways approaching to yours, are of a rarity that enhances their value, and the public cannot ſpare them to idleneſs, to intemperance, or to faction. We would call, Sir, on the patriotiſm of the citizen, or if that claim ſhould appear too general,

we would rouſe the pride of the man. Did heaven form a ſoul like yours, and endow it with powers ſo exalted, to calculate the throws at Brookes's or to meaſure the ground at Newmarket? Think of yourſelf more worthily, Sir; leave thoſe provinces to the Dukes of *Piccadilly* or *Bloomſbury*, or to any other Dukes or Lords, whoſe reputation no meanneſs can lower, whoſe minds no inſignificance of employment can debaſe. But for you, Sir, thus to miſemploy your talents, is a ſuicide of the mind, impious to heaven, and unjuſt to yourſelf and your country. Think how many events may ariſe to call them into important ſtations, when the war of parties ſhall have ceaſed, when perſonal diſtinctions ſhall be forgotten. Political proſperity is of very uncertain duration; and to ſtates as to individuals, proſperity itſelf has its dangers. In oppoſition, or in power, your ſuper-eminent abilities muſt always be valuable, if you will but know their value, and point their uſe: but while you ſink the one and pervert the other, though we may afford you our admiration or our regret, we cannot beſtow our reſpect or our confidence.

BRUTUS.

May 31ſt, 1790.

LETTER

LETTER VI.

To the Right Hon. E. B——.

SIR,

WHEN I ſome time ago took occaſion to addreſs you, I recommended, with an honeſt wiſh for your fame, the application of your talents to nobler objects than the contentions of party politics, "*the ſtruggle for place, or the bickerings of faction.*" I called upon you to exert the powers you are acknowledged to poſſeſs, "the force of a ſcholar's ſtile, the richneſs of a poet's imagination, to correct the errors or expoſe the abuſes of public meaſures." It flatters me to ſee that you have fulfilled the wiſh I then formed on your behalf: your treatiſe on the *French Revolution* has evinced the fulleſt poſſeſſion of your abilities, and ſhewed them pointed to an object of ſuch magnitude in the hiſtory of mankind, as fully deſerved to call them forth.

In this performance you have preſerved all the ſenſibility, bordering on enthuſiaſm, which has been always characteriſtic of your happieſt political appearances. Feeling as a Chriſtain for religion, as a Gentleman for honourable diſtinction, as a Man for the diſtreſſes of the unfortunate, you will be pardoned for painting in ſtrong, and perhaps exaggerated colours, the injuſtice which, in your opinion, all of them

them have ſuffered from the preſent Democracy of France. Many of your readers will coincide with your opinions; all of them will reliſh your wit and your imagery; your ſtile, even in its defects, will find warm admirers: theſe decorations of your work I will not ſtop to criticiſe or to applaud; I have certainly found more, much more room for applauſe than for criticiſm; but I will venture a few remarks which have ſtruck me, in a firſt peruſal of your work, on ſome of its general principles, and its repreſentation of that very ſtriking event of which it treats.

Nothing ſeems to me more juſt than your developement of the great leading truths of our conſtitution, and of that renewal or reſtoration of its principles which took place at the revolution in 1688. I have heard that this part of your work has ſurpriſed and hurt ſome of your Whig friends and admirers. But I confeſs that I have not been able to find in it any offence againſt the principles of reaſonable Whiggiſm; if, as a party-man you have ſometimes been conſidered as profeſſing a zeal in that reſpect, beyond the moderation of your preſent performance, it will remain to be determined on which ſide truth and reaſon lies; and whether the ſober confeſſion of your Faith, in this publication, be an apoſtacy or a converſion.

In treating of the proceedings of the National Aſſembly of France, and of the new conſtitution which they wiſh to eſtabliſh, you do not ſeem quite ſo moderate and impartial. The Government of a great nation is a machine of ſo much complexity, that

that objections, and thoſe too of magnitude, will eaſily occur to a mind leſs acute, and leſs inventive than yours. Objections will ariſe more eaſily againſt the operations of a republican, or any thing near a republican government, than againſt thoſe of a monarchy.—Abſolute power is that pervading energy which ſimplifies every thing. Give it but the adjuncts of wiſdom, juſtice, and benevolence, and nothing is ſo delightful to imagination. You know, Sir, that mythology and poetry have always adopted it, becauſe in their hands it is ſimple, beautiful, and ſublime. The difficulty of modelling a new government of this ſort is one great reaſon why reformers have, as you obſerve, generally contented themſelves with only improving on the old ſyſtem, and have kept as much of that remaining as the immediate feeling of oppreſſion or inconvenience would allow. But the change muſt always be greater in proportion to the depravity of the former government. The conſtitution of England, when our anceſtors re-eſtabliſhed it at the Revolution, had ſuſtained ſome injuries from the weakneſs or bigotry of the monarch, which could be removed without much violence; that of France had abuſes inherent in its principle which could not ſo eaſily be done away. To uſe your own favourite alluſion, the Engliſh conſtitution had only ſuffered ſome dilapidations which it was not difficult to repair: the French was rotten at the foundation, and it required a great deal of pulling down to remedy the miſchief.

You allow nothing to the violence inſeparable from the application of this remedy. You forget the

the reſiſtance of the king to the firſt proceedings of the National Aſſembly, which unavoidably produced this violence; the diſmiſſion of M. Neckar; the manifeſto from Verſailles; the army of Marſhal Broglio. Thoſe meaſures of ſtrong coercion were neceſſarily oppoſed by exertions of equal force; and in ſuch conflicts, in the ſhock of heated and contending parties, not only delicacy and decorum, but even juſtice and humanity are ſometimes forgotten. Even after the conteſt is at an end, the principle of violence will continue to operate; the ſtorm may have ceaſed, but the ſwell of the ocean will remain.

With the people, eſpecially, that violence will continue, and new authority will not eaſily be able to repreſs it. The national quickneſs and vivacity of France runs out eaſily into extremes; the ſentiment of the moment catches with rapidity, and hurries into exceſs. There is a ſentiment, even of cruelty, among the French, which has often been remarked with aſtoniſhment in ſo civilized a people. It was this ſentiment which prompted their inhuman applauſe, when *Damien's* firſt ſhriek atteſted the ſkill of the executioner. They looked on the aſſaſſin of their king, and uttered this barbarous plaudit at his tortures. 'Twas a *Vive le roi* in a ſavage ſtile; that *Vive le roi* which made them of old forget their country; you need not wonder that, at preſent, the *Vive la nation* makes them forget their king.

Yet thoſe outrages, which every good man like you muſt regret, to which feeling and eloquence like yours can give ſo much dramatic effect, have not,

not, perhaps, been ſo frequent, or ſo great as might have been expected in a period of ſuch commotion and tumult. The force that could wrench its ſceptre from deſpotiſm could not be exerted with the eaſe and ſmoothneſs of regular and ordinary power. If it ſometimes ſhook the pillars of juſtice, if it ſometimes looſened the bonds of humanity, the tranſient evil muſt be endured for the ſake of the future permanent good. If France ſhall ultimately obtain freedom at no greater expence than the blood which has already been ſpilt, though individuals may have to mourn their private loſſes, the public cannot repent of the purchaſe.

But does humanity never ſpeak on the other ſide of the queſtion, nor think of what thoſe wretches ſuffered, on whom the former government wrecked its vengeance uncontrouled? Their ſufferings, indeed, were not ſeen in the ſtreets, nor related in Journals; for the dungeons of the *Baſtille* and of the Caſtle of Vincennes, were cloſed upon their miſeries. But have you, Sir, whoſe reſearches have travelled ſo far into Aſia for ſtories of oppreſſion, never heard of thoſe at your door? You will tell us, as the other defenders of the French Monarchy have done, of the infrequency of ſuch inſtances. But in the ſyſtem of government, it is not what *is* done, but what *may* be done, that wiſdom and foreſight look to.—You talk of the mildneſs of Louis XVI. you ſpeak with a bombaſtic rapture of the charms of his Queen: the poets of *Auguſtus*, with a taſte as elegant, and a ſtile ſomewhat chaſter than yours, could tell us of the mildneſs and munificence

of his reign; but that power which in him was mildneſs and munificence, in his ſucceſſors was tyranny and murder.

The circle that ſees and can beſt talk of Kings, is a narrow and a partial one; and the delegated power of the Sovereign is often miſchievous in the extreme, while he, from whom it flows, is amiable and beneficent. Kings may be praiſed by poets, and idolized by courtiers, even without the aid of much imagination or flattery, while their people are groaning under the oppreſſions of their government. On ſuch teſtimony Louis XIV. has been celebrated as the moſt liberal, the moſt magnificent, the greateſt of Monarchs; the miſeries of millions of his ſubjects make no figure in his hiſtory, or at leaſt in the common and current ideas of his hiſtory. To them no painter has given colour, no poet deſcription; they make no part of the pedeſtal in the ſtatue of the *Place des Victoires*.

The diſtreſſes of the lower orders of the people, the want of food, of cloathing, of fuel, are not calculated to figure in painting and ſculpture, to melt in poetry, or to rouſe in eloquence. Theſe orders, however, are what political and philoſophical truth muſt own to be the nation. It was the misfortune in France, that the manners modelled by the form of government, eſtabliſhed a ſort of contempt for every individual, who had not rank and faſhion to recommend him. This mode of thinking was not the leſs fatal, and was much leſs eaſy to be corrected, for its really not being highly cenſurable in thoſe who indulged it. It was not the effect of

ſelfiſhneſs

ſelfiſhneſs and inhumanity; it aroſe from habit merely; it was worn by a man of the Court like his new ſuit, without any other conſideration than that his companions had the ſame. His ſphere of connection with mankind reached no farther than a few parties of rank and faſhion, whom he called the World. The twenty millions of Frenchmen, who were not of theſe parties, went for nothing in the account. The men of ſuperior rank who thought thus, were in general polite, obliging, honourable, and brave. Some of them, whom ſtrangers were moſt likely to ſee, were poſſeſſed alſo of the more ſolid and eſtimable qualities of taſte, of ſentiment, of information. But they ſtill retained the ariſtocratic prejudices of their order. Theſe are, indeed, not unnatural to minds of a certain refinement. The heroiſm of knight errantry, the gallantry of a cavalier, the ſpirit of hereditary nobility, all theſe intereſt the feelings and captivate the imagination. We are, therefore, not ſurpriſed, that you, Sir, ſhould be ſeduced by them.

It is not, perhaps, unfair to bring the very abaſement which the nobility of France has ſuffered, in proof of its having ſomewhat deſerved that abaſement. That this great and numerous body, poſſeſſed for ſo many centuries of its elevated ſtation, with ſo much power, and ſo much property to attach mens intereſts, with all its preſent and all its traditionary grandeur to overawe their minds; that ſuch a body ſhould have ſhrunk into annihilation without a ſtruggle, is pretty ſtrong evidence of its having loſt, by ſome demerit, that influence which

it ſhould have had in the country; that it held the people in a vaſſalage intolerably oppreſſive, and had exerciſed all the feudal tyranny without having gained any of the feudal attachment.

A ſimilar argument may be brought with regard to the church. The higher eccleſiaſtics muſt have forfeited the eſteem and regard of their own ſubordinate clergy, and of the people, before their power and their domains could have been wreſted from them, without the impreſſion of ſacrilege or impiety, almoſt without the idea of injuſtice. Had they claimed veneration by their ſanctity, or good will by their benevolence, the reverence, or the love of the people, would have felt and reſented the infringment on their poſſeſſions. The people would have complained from ſentiment, but it would have ſtill been a queſtion how far they complained with reaſon. The property of the church certainly ſtood on a very different footing from that of an hereditary deſcendible eſtate. No man is born Archbiſhop of Paris, or Abbé of St. Germains. Their great incomes were a ſtipendiary allowance, though they aroſe from the poſſeſſion of land. The function of eccleſiaſtical is more ſacred than that of temporal offices; but if their emoluments are beyond the abilities of the ſtate, or if any of thoſe religious offices are entirely unneceſſary, it may fairly enough be argued, that the power of reſumption of the antient ſtipends, or of abolition of the antient offices, lies with the people. Even if it were to be granted that all the revenues of the church had been laid out in the beſt poſſible way, yet the charity of the ſtate,

like

like the charity of individuals, muſt be a ſecondary conſideration to its own immediate ſubſiſtence or ſupport. State neceſſity called for retrenchments and for impoſts. Had the King retained that power which this very neceſſity tended to overthrow, he would probably have wrung ſome more millions of livres from the poverty of the people. Was it much to be regretted that his ſucceſſors in that power found a reſource in the exorbitant wealth of the church?

I eaſily allow for your feelings on behalf of the monaſtic eſtabliſhments. There is a "dim religious" reverence, a tenderneſs for ſtoried melancholy, which the heart and the fancy will readily acknowledge towards their "antient ſolitary reign;" but the aboliſhment of their cold aſcetic *auſterities*, (for in a cloyſter there can ſcarcely be any *virtues*) will not, I believe, be conſidered by philoſophy, (or philanthropy, if you ſhould diſlike the word philoſophy) as one of the evils of the Revolution.

From you, Sir, one would hardly have expected that violent and ſomewhat illiberal attack on the philoſophers and men of letters in France which your book contains. Do you really, in your cooler judgment, believe, that the world has gained nothing by their labours? Has your ſympathy in the pride or proſperity of mankind found nothing with which it could congratulate itſelf in all the increaſed knowledge and humanity of the preſent century, for a part of which we are indebted to the men whom your zeal in this argument has condemned in the groſs? Would you forego all the diſcoveries of their ſcience, all the productions of their genius, to retire

tire again into the ſhade of that gloomy ſuperſtition which your fancy has hallowed? In all ages philoſophers have been ſceptical, and wits licentious: but it is not like the liberality of Mr. B. to proſcribe philoſophy and wit in a peeviſh indulgence of his averſion to ſcepticiſm and licentiouſneſs.

As I am not a pleader ſo determined for one of the parties in this great queſtion as you, Sir, I will freely confeſs, that in the opinion of thinking and impartial men, there are, in the preſent ſtate of France, conſiderable abuſes, and that in the proſpect of her future condition, there are to be foreſeen much difficulty and danger. In ſome of the members of her National Aſſembly there is a want of virtue, in more there is a want of wiſdom, and in a ſtill greater number a want of moderation; while in the aggregate body there is a deficiency of power to enable it always to adopt the beſt meaſures, or to enforce thoſe which it has found a neceſſity of adopting. From the impoſition and collection of the revenue, from the conſtruction of the inferior municipal juriſdictions, but eſpecially from the ſituation of the army, they are threatened with the overthrow of all they have done in correction of the old, or in the eſtabliſhment of the new Conſtitution. But many of the friends of mankind will hope, as certainly all of them muſt wiſh, that all thoſe dangers may be avoided and thoſe difficulties overcome; that the wiſdom of the enlightened, and the virtue of the good among them, may ſucceed in eſtabliſhing, though not a perfect or an unexceptionable government, one at leaſt more conſonant to the *natural rights*

rights (for the expreſſion, after all their abuſe, and your ridicule, is ſtill in itſelf a good one) and more friendly to the happineſs of man than that which they have aboliſhed.

Your objections are ſtated when the new conſtitutions are yet in their beginning, before the effects of their general operation can be ſeen, or the errors in their detail corrected. You write with the deciſion of a ſuppoſed perfect knowledge of the preſent circumſtances, and predict with a perfect confidence of the future. A little more diffidence in opinion, and a little more reſerve in expreſſion, might have been ſafer, as well as more conciliating. One conſideration ſhould have eſpecially induced this, which muſt have great weight in a calm and diſpaſſionate view of this whole buſineſs. The bulk of the people ſeem to be ſatisfied with the Revolution. After a conſiderable time to cool from the fervor of newly-acquired freedom, a great majority of the nation have, on trying occaſions, declared for, and ſupported the meaſures of the National Aſſembly. It is bold in an individual foreigner, however able and enlightened, to arraign the meaſures which ſo general a ſuffrage of the people, whoſe intereſt they concern, has ſanctioned.

While I venture theſe remarks on your performance, I mean not to depreciate its merit, or to doubt the goodneſs of thoſe motives with which it was written. I feel all its genius and its ability, with that partiality which is inſpired by its virtue and its benevolence. This is an advantage which the writings of its author, in general, poſſeſs. The

defects

defects of his character are pardoned like the defects of his writings, becauſe they proceed rather from the extreme of eſtimable qualities, than from the want of them; from overſtrained feeling, from miſtaken humanity, from the zeal of right puſhed almoſt to fanaticiſm.

With me, Sir, the regret of ſuch defects is always attended by a wiſh for their correction, and a hope of the uſefulneſs of thoſe talents by which they are accompanied. From the ſpirit of your preſent performance, I anticipate a conduct beneficial to the community. I ſee in it a dread of the inconſiderate deſire of reform; a jealouſy of needleſs innovation, which it ſeems to me extremely uſeful to keep awake at the preſent time. Even when the outcry for change and innovation is honeſt, it may be hurtful; but if it is only the cloak of profligate ſelf-intereſt, or inordinate ambition, who for their own private advantage would riſk the peace and proſperity of the country, it is doubly to be dreaded. It is not from the mean or deſperate tools of ſedition that the country has moſt to fear, but from more artful and more reſpectable partizans, whoſe abilities for miſchief hide their inclination for it. To you, Sir, and other virtuous citizens, the public looks for protection againſt ſuch enemies. If faction ſhould at any time wiſh to corrupt our freedom into anarchy, to uſurp the juſt prerogatives of the Crown, or to infringe the rights of the people, from you, Sir, we ſhall expect their defence. With moderate and virtuous men, the preſent performance will be a guarantee for your conduct; they will figure you laying

laying your hand upon this book, ſwearing loyalty to your king, and fidelity to the conſtitution; pledging yourſelf as attached to no principles ſo much as to thoſe of genuine patriotiſm and public virtue; as ſubſervient to the intereſts of no party in oppoſition to thoſe of your country.

BRUTUS.

Nov. 22d, 1790.

LETTER VII.

To R. B. S——, *Esq.*

SIR,

SOME of the severer philosophers have excluded eloquence, poetry, and wit, from their system of a republic, as tending to mislead the people, to perplex those councils which wisdom only should be suffered to guide. This will readily be allowed too rigid an idea for modern times, yet it were well, perhaps, if in public men and in public assemblies, the more solid qualities of knowledge, virtue, and prudence, were allowed a superiority to those ornamental talents which captivate and dazzle the lively and the unthinking.

You have contrived to apply wit to subjects generally held unsusceptible of its attractions, to the dry and intricate operations of figures, to the complicated details of finance, to the laborious investigation of public accounts. Perhaps, however, exclusive of the exuberance of your fancy, this talent might in some measure be derived from the private habits of your life. The Lydians are said to have invented gaming, in a season of famine, to appease hunger: so, if a man cannot pay an account, it seems an allowable expedient if he can contrive to laugh

laugh at it. From the ſame ſource certain ſplenetic people have traced your unwearied attention to the national debt. Who, ſays your favourite poet,

> " Who can hold a fire in his hand
> By thinking on the froſty Caucaſus ?"

But the millions ſo often in your mouth have ſome little connexion with the money you hope for in your purſe; becauſe there is a diſtant proſpect that you may one day be in a ſituation to draw on them for yourſelf.

In your late annual harangue on this ſubject, you ventured on ſome expreſſions which even the moſt innocent and unſuſpicious of the new country members could not help applying. When you talked of " deluding our creditors," and of the " land of *promiſe*," they looked to one another as *Scrub* does to Mrs. Sullen in the play, with faces lighted up by the diſcovery of a joke amidſt the bewildering darkneſs of the *unfunded debt* and the *ſinking fund*. The laſt phraſe, as they were ignorant of its being borrowed from *Junius*, they could hardly have expected from you, as it was a bible one; but they recollected other inſtances of your having ſhewn a perfect knowledge of the hiſtory of the Jews *.

Some, indeed, of the elder and graver of thoſe country gentlemen, who have ſome oldfaſhioned *landed intereſt* prejudices about them, do not ſo eaſily reliſh jokes upon public matters, when uttered by men who have " no ſtake in the hedge," they will allow a D—— to wander after extravagant con-

* Vid. an admirable ſcene in the *School for Scandal*.

 ceits,

ceits, or a H— to twiſt ſcripture into buffoonery; becauſe thoſe gentlemen have ſome thouſands of acres to back their pretenſions to humour; as if wit, like bail, were to be juſtified by the extent of a man's poſſeſſions: they will even pardon your friend Mr. C— of Norfolk his honeſt declaration of diſapproving "every one thing the miniſter has done," becauſe a gentleman of ſo many thouſands a-year is entitled to that ſort of unperplexed wholeſale underſtanding, to which ſuch a declaration is ſuitable. But from you, Sir, they expect ſome appoſiteneſs in your alluſions, and ſome argument in your objections.

Thoſe gentlemen, however, ſhould conſider whether the limitations they would impoſe on you are conſonant to reaſon and juſtice. When you come down to the Houſe to bully Adminiſtration by ſtrong aſſertions, or to ridicule it by flippant jeſts, you are only labouring in your vocation. The Houſe of Commons is your eſtate, your freehold, out of which you are to draw by every means in your power, as they do from their acres, your revenue and your credit. The public, the country of which you talk ſo well, is not the object of your concern, but merely the object of your diſcuſſion; it is only the topic of your argument, the canvas for the pictures of your fancy, the theme for the diſplay of your wit. Whether it really thrives or not, whether the meaſures you oppoſe be really for its advantage, cannot reaſonably be ſuppoſed to have any impreſſion on your mind. The proſperity of the public *eſtate*, with the ſituation of which you ſeem ſo minutely

nutely acquainted, is nothing to you; its *Stewardſhip*, whether it proſpered or not, might be ſomething, and you have many of the virtues of a Steward.

But the preſent time is unfavourable to the ſucceſs of your exertions. Your pleaſantry will not unbend the muſcles of thoſe plodding faces which are to be ſeen in Lombard-ſtreet and the Stock Exchange; and I will ſuggeſt a doubt whether it be worth your while to diſturb your holiday feſtivity with the more ſerious and elaborate calculations of your Anti-Budget. The little hieroglyphic article at the end of your moſt favourite newſpaper, will outweigh all the lengthened columns it devotes to your eloquence; while the 3 per cents are at 80, the Miniſter will ſmile alike at the comic powers of Mr. S———, and the tragic predictions of Dr. Price.

BRUTUS.

January 5th, 1791.

LETTER

LETTER VIII.

To the Right Hon. W. P——.

SIR,

SOME laughing author tells us of an old lady, who, upon any little grievance that befel her, uſed to write to the King. I am ſufficiently aware of the ridicule which may be affixed to the circumſtance of an individual addreſſing the Miniſter.—Yet a man not unaccuſtomed to think on political ſubjects, who has lived with ſome degree of obſervation, and amidſt a circle capable of informing him, to a very advanced period of life, may, in this country, and in this era of political diſquiſition, be pardoned the vanity of ſuch a correſpondence. An honeſt man without any pretenſion to ſuperior abilities, who has only talents and moderation enough to diſcover what the better part of the country thinks, and who has no motive to miſlead him either in forming or in expreſſing his opinion, may be of ſome little uſe even to a well-informed Miniſter. If he cannot influence the conduct of a bad adminiſtration, he may at leaſt convey a ſuffrage not unpleaſing to a good one.

To you, Sir, he will be particularly entitled to addreſs himſelf, when he conſiders you as the Miniſter of the people. This title, I know, has not uſually

uſually been allowed you: titles are given to men, as names to things, from their firſt appearance to the eye; and you were certainly leſs formed to conciliate popularity than to deſerve it. But whoever looks back to the hiſtory of your public life, will ſee that its diſtinctions chiefly flowed from the ſuffrage of the people. Under the ſhade of your father's name, and with a fortune not unlike to his, you came into power, in oppoſition to that Ariſtocracy which had ſo long encompaſſed the throne. That ariſtocracy forgot the moderation which uſed to ſecure its influence, which ſtill characterized many of its individuals; it forced the crown to an alliance with the people; and the people, who are generally ſomewhat guided by ſentiment, were not unwilling to truſt the hereditary virtue of a young man who had not had time to foul his mind with the practice of older and more experienced politicians. This connection, Sir, we wiſh you not to forget. We have not yet found reaſon to withhold our confidence in the *wiſdom* of your meaſures; but it is ſtill more material to retain that which we beſtow on their *virtue*.

In conſideration of this, we are ſometimes willing to allow a little more to the feelings of the man, than may be thought to accord with the cautious prudence of the Miniſter. If, in ſome meaſures of a brilliant and popular kind, you have ventured to engage with a degree of warmth beyond the ordinary reſerve of a ſtateſman, with a quickneſs not ſuited to that wary ſtep, that *pas de plomb* which the hoary counſellor of Louis XIII. recommends, we are

are diſpoſed to ſeparate thoſe individual inſtances from the ordinary tenor of your adminiſtration, to allow a ſort of holiday excurſion to official prudence; and, as tradition tells of *Charlemagne* in his hours of ſocial feſtivity, to ſuppoſe the Chancellor of the Exchequer to be gone, and the animated generoſity of Mr. P— to intereſt itſelf in the ſomewhat romantic notion of the time.

In this country, he who begins a ſecond *luſtrum* in the higheſt department of the ſtate may be regarded as a permanent Miniſter. You have ſtood ſome ſhocks which may be fairly held as proofs of the firmneſs of your mind, the extent of your talents, and the probable ſtability of your ſituation. In one of the rudeſt conflicts of party which the nation has witneſſed in modern times, you came off with victory, though oppoſed by the ableſt and moſt experienced politicians. In two conteſts with foreign powers, you ſupported the dignity, and exerted the force of the empire, with a deciſion, a promptitude and an energy, that has ſeldom been ſurpaſſed by a Britiſh adminiſtration. It muſt be allowed that in all thoſe events a very uncommon degree of good fortune attended you; but the epithet *felix* is a compliment in every wiſe man's vocabulary as well as in the Roman. To ſeize the occaſions which good-fortune preſents to us is always the mark of ſuperior talents; to ſeize them at all is a mark of ſuch talents in poſſeſſion; to ſeize them with the readineſs which you ſhewed in ſome inſtances, is a mark of ſuch talents at command. The public acknowledged this in you, and gave you credit for a

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ſort of intuitive ſtate abilities, which ſhot forth at once into vigour, unripened by time, unconfirmed by experience.

This is the language of eulogium; your enemies will but juſt venture to call it flattery. But I have neither motive nor a mind for flattery, and my purpoſe is not eulogium. The talents and virtues of a Miniſter are the right, the property of the people; I call upon you, in the name of the people, for their exerciſe and their uſe. In this demand I have but little perſonal intereſt; I have lived through many miniſtries, and have now but a few days left of pride in the glory, or mortification in the diſgrace of my country.—Forgive this old man's mention of myſelf; I ſpeak in the firſt perſon, but I think for my equals and co-evals, a circle as much more reſpectable, as it is more impartial, than that which glitters in the ſunſhine of your favour, or that which ſcowls around the leaders of Oppoſition. From this middling rank of men, that point in the country where information and independence meet, ariſes the genuine and laſting reputation of a Miniſter. From ſuch men aroſe the fame of your father; I hope you have an ambition proud enough to look for that of their poſterity.

I truſt I ſhall not be ſuppoſed to favour deſpotiſm, when I ſay that in this country the public intereſt ſuffers nearly as often from a want of power as from a want of good intention in Miniſters. It has been the vice of ſome adminiſtrations to compromiſe away their duty and their reputation, to be ſatisfied with the preſumed purity of their intentions, and to

ſuffer all the miſchiefs that could reſult from their want of power to carry thoſe intentions into execution, to fall upon the country. We truſt you are "made of ſterner ſtuff," that you will never ſubmit to barter the pride of right for the vanity of place, nor cling by the elevation of office amidſt the wreck of real and honourable dignity.

At preſent you have no ſuch trial to encounter: With the confidence of the people, and the concurrence of a great majority of their repreſentatives, it is a compliment, if we look without jealouſy on your power to promote our intereſts. With that commanding place in the ſcale of Europe, which ſome late inſtances of the force and reſources of the empire have given it, its credit and its commerce are at their higheſt point; the public revenue has been augmented beyond even the ſanguine calculations of the Treaſury. You had the prudence to adopt ſome of the beſt ideas of your predeceſſors, and the good fortune to ſee them as ſucceſsful in the execution as they were promiſing in theory. The increaſed wealth of the country enables it to bear increaſed taxes with but little complaint from individuals, and with no hurtful conſequences even to local and particular manufactures. Theſe advantages we have gained in the ſhort ſpace of a five years adminiſtration; and it was another piece of your good fortune that they ſucceeded a period of public calamity, which, after the elation of former ſucceſſes, we felt with an unreaſonable depreſſion, and predicted conſequences in future, to which the temper of the nation always diſpoſes it to give ear in the hour of adverſity, but which

which its vigour and itsgenius always contradict in experience.

With all thoſe advantages on your ſide, with the reaſonable proſpect of a laſting peace, and at the beginning of a parliament friendly to your exertions, it may fairly be expected that you will think of objects beyond the daily and common employments of official men, whoſe minds are often chained down by the cares and neceſſities of the moment, forced to devote their talents to the petty conteſts of internal cabals, to the management of narrow and ſtruggling majorities, or the paltry ſolicitudes of elections to ſecure them. If the weight of the people with you ſaves you the trouble of ſuch attentions, they have ſome title to expect in return thoſe great and permanent benefits which they place you in a ſituation to procure, or at leaſt to attempt with a probability of ſucceſs, for your country. One or two of thoſe important objects I will take the liberty to mention; not that I ſuppoſe you ſtand in need of the ſuggeſtion, but merely to tell you, that the people look to them with anxiety, and to you with expectation.

One, which muſt of neceſſity ſoon become an object of your attention, is the ſituation of our *Eaſtern* poſſeſſions. The great company by which that Empire is immediately held, exhibits a ſingular phenomenon in politics. A ſociety of merchants, incorporated for the purpoſe of trading with a joint capital, and ſupporting by the magnitude of that capital the demands and difficulties of an extenſive and diſtant commerce; that corporation becoming ſove-

reign of a country containing 16 millions of inhabitants, and affording an annual revenue of ſeveral millions Sterling, is an event which muſt certainly, in one way or another, produce powerful and momentous effects on the nation in which it exiſts. Whether theſe are uſeful or pernicious is a queſtion of much doubt; it is a queſtion which, in your own mind at leaſt, you muſt unavoidably meet; and it will not be eaſy to avoid a diſcuſſion of it in Parliament.

There may be abuſes, which, from their very magnitude, we dare not attack; gangrenes in the ſtate, like ſome in the body, which we are content to palliate, from a fear of amputation being mortal. But in both caſes our fears often betray us, and it is only from a conjunction of fortitude with ſkill that we are to look for a cure. In the conſideration of this great queſtion you will be aſſailed by a thouſand motives of preſent conveniency, "That bawd Commodity," as Shakeſpeare phraſes it, will inſinuate the danger to the finances, to the credit, to the growing wealth, and the increaſing power of the country, which any change ſo great as an entire reſumption of the charter of this company, or even taking their territorial acquiſitions into the hands of Government, would occaſion. But if wiſdom and philoſophy ſpeak on the oppoſite ſide; if they tell you that, from the time of *Carthage* downwards, the Dominion of Merchants has been oppreſſive and fatal; that from the nature and conſtitution of the Company which holds this Dominion, (particularly the opportunity which it affords to its wealthy ſervants

vants of purchaſing by ſhares in its ſtock, a ſanction for their own malverſations) there are abuſes in its adminiſtration ſuperadded to the general evils of mercantile ſovereignty; that the very commercial advantages pretended to ariſe from it to the parent ſtate, are but the ſpecious miſchiefs of monopoly; and that the real intereſts of our manufactures and commerce would be infinitely promoted by throwing open the Eaſt India trade to the invention and induſtry of the nation at large. If ſuch arguments, which a liberal and enlightened period like the preſent is accuſtomed to hear without wonder or alarm, ſhould preſs upon your conſideration, you will liſten to them with impartiality *.—You will not interpoſe your own private conveniency or accommodation between ſuch advantages and the public; you will not ſuffer a party in the India Houſe, or their repreſentatives in the Houſe of Commons, to overawe or to rebuke the genius of Great Britain, of freedom, of humanity.

The exiſtence of that party is one of the greateſt evils of which we have to complain in this buſineſs. It has become a kind of fourth eſtate, and weighs with an unconſtitutional preponderancy, on the

* It has been ſaid, that the late *Adam Smith* (whoſe genius and knowledge embraced more objects, and produced greater effects in their diſcuſſion, than any other writer in Europe) wiſhed to have ſeen you once more before his death, to have left, like *Cato*, the laſt ſound his voice could utter, his "*delenda eſt Carthago*" againſt the Eaſt India Monopoly. I allow ſomething for the enthuſiaſm of a ſyſtem ſo ſplendid as his; but the arguments for his conviction are before the world, and you are not ignorant of their force.

meaſures

meaſures of Government. It is only a virtuous Miniſter who will wiſh to reſiſt it; it is only a powerful one who can reſiſt it with ſafety: if we call for this reſiſtance in you, Sir, it is from a confidence with which you ought to be flattered, both in your uprightneſs and ability.

In the province of Miniſter, you will probably confine yourſelf to public and political conſiderations; elſe you might hear, from many wiſe and virtuous citizens, complaints of this Aſiatic Syſtem in more private points of view. This Cruſade of Avarice, they would tell you, like thoſe of ſuperſtition in the middle ages, powerfully affects the manners of the people. It has increaſed the influence of "ill-perſuading gold" in a moſt rapid and extenſive degree; it has changed the ſober and moderate economy of domeſtic life, which nurſed at once the private and the patriotic virtues; it has ſubſtituted the vanity of oſtentatious wealth for the ambition of an honeſt popularity, and ſpread over the land the refinements of Eaſtern luxury, to diſplace the wholeſome enjoyments of induſtry, and the manly and vigorous exertions of genius.

As a mere commercial queſtion, it will not eſcape you, that in this trade, as in every other, the ſpirit of adventure, if the country is ripe for it, will burſt the ſhackles of exceſſive reſtriction, and that if an open trade is prohibited, a contraband one will be carried on equally hurtful to the Company, without equal benefit to the State. I believe it is pretty well known, that veſſels under Imperial or Swediſh colours have lain in the very pool of the Thames, fitting

ting out in the employment of Britiſh Merchants for India. Theſe interlopers the Company were afraid to ſtop, even with the law on their ſide, or to meet the queſtion of the inſufficiency of their inveſtments for either the home or the foreign market. Will not this clandeſtine invaſion of a monopoly, which they only hold againſt their country, ſtill prevail? Will not *Ireland* openly aſſail it?

Our connexion with *Ireland* is an object of conſideration leſs preſſing, but not leſs momentous, nor leſs difficult than that with India. It was reſerved for that unfortunate Miniſter by whoſe timid and palliating politics America was ſevered from the Empire, to looſen, by a like imbecility of meaſures, the cloſeneſs of that tie which held Ireland to Great Britain. During a capricious ſucceſſion of Vice-Roys, he had alienated the affections as much as he had loſt the reſpect of Ireland. By the common effect of his half reſolutions, he had kept up all the odium of hoſtility, without any of its firmneſs; the face of a bully, with the heart of a coward.—But I will not drag him from the ſhade of that retirement in which the compaſſion of his country allows him to be forgotten. His ſituation is intereſting, and diſarms reſentment; let him but feel for the miſchief he has cauſed, and my charity ſhall ſpare him.

Without going back then to the cauſes or the conduct by which this event took place, it is ſufficient to conſider, that in fact Ireland is in that ſituation with regard to Great Britain, which is pregnant with danger to both. It is a ſubject of ſo delicate a kind,

that

that I will uſe no determinate vocables to deſcribe that ſituation; it is like a matrimonial quarrel, which ſhould never be defined, but which, it is ſufficient to know, is ruinous to the family, and ought to be made up as ſoon as poſſible. I know not that Ireland, ſoberly and moderately ſpeaking, has gained any thing ſubſtantial by theſe conceſſions, which, in the hour of our weakneſs, ſhe wrung from Britain: yet it was natural for a ſpirited people who felt ſome of the badges of former oppreſſion hanging upon them, to ſhake them off indignantly, though they weighed not a ſtraw againſt their intereſt. But if the ſpirit of jealouſy and ſeparation ſhould increaſe, the conſequences may be more eaſily feared than foretold. To Britain they muſt certainly be extremely hurtful; but to Ireland, ruinous: I believe there is not a ſenſible moderate man in that kingdom, who can look on the ſituation of his country and doubt the propoſition. Such is the danger of the preſent poſition of both countries; an ordinary adminiſtration may palliate or temporiſe with that danger; but it would be a proud undertaking for a great and a popular Miniſter to endeavour to remove it for ever.

The word *Union*, I believe, is not popular in Ireland; yet if reaſon or precedent may be looked to, the idea ſhould not be diſagreeable to that country. Every advantage which Scotland has received from a ſimilar connection, Ireland is better calculated to obtain; and many of the diſadvantages which nationality magnified at the time, and which in ſome degree have been felt ſince, Ireland is not ſo ſubject

to

to as Scotland was. Her commerce and manufactures ſtand more in need of the foſtering influence of this junction with her wealthy neighbour than thoſe of Scotland did; and the non-reſidence of her abſentees, if increaſed at all, would be increaſed in a much ſmaller proportion. Her jealouſy of an united legiſlature may be natural; and yet, if the probable conduct of the legiſlative body be conſidered, I think ſhe will not have much to fear on that ſcore:—She knows the value of her preſent repreſentatives, and I will not preſume to characterize them even from their own authority. To ſecure her from an over-burden of Britiſh debt would be an arrangement difficult, but not impoſſible; and as to the taxes ſhe might hereafter be liable to, it is her misfortune at preſent to be ſubject to ſo few. The few to which ſhe is ſubject, preſs on her ſtarving peaſantry with a weight that bears them down in a miſerable and hopeleſs vaſſalage; if commerce and manufactures ſhould ſubject her to thoſe of a better ſort, it would be a ſymptom of her proſperity: nobody complains of ſucceeding to an eſtate, becauſe the inheritance burthens him with a quit-rent.—The ſubject, I know, is complicated, and this is not the place, even had I the abilities, to detail it.—I do but point it out to your conſideration, at a period when it may be conſidered with advantage; when peace has left both countries leiſure for the diſcuſſion and, when Britain is in a ſituation to make her friendſhip a privilege, and her diſpleaſure a misfortune. If there is patriotiſm on either ſide of the water, it will compromiſe little loſſes for the attainment of

an object ſo eſſential to the future ſecurity of the empire.

I will not add to the length of a letter already too long by ſuggeſtions of a leſs important kind. There are local improvements and local abuſes, of which a miniſter may long remain ignorant from the very power that ſhould procure him information; becauſe that power creates a motive in individuals for concealment or miſrepreſentation. A miniſter is commonly miſled by individuals; it is the broad and general voice of the people, informed by experience and prompted by neceſſity, that can truly guide him. The information which he thus acquires is like the light of the ſun, which equally illuminates every object around us; private official intelligence is often like a narrow dark lanthorn gleam, that only enlightens a corner.

If I ſhall find it neceſſary to trouble you with any further communications, they ſhall at leaſt have the merit of fidelity. Abſolutely unknown, though I believe not altogether unnoticed, I cannot be allured by the hope of reward; and it can alarm none but bad men, to be told, that falſehood is the only danger I ſhall fear.

BRUTUS.

January 17th, 1791.

LETTER

LETTER IX.

To His Grace the D. *of* P———.

My LORD,

AMIDST the violence of political conteſt to which this country is ſubject, men are too generally meaſured, whether in praiſe or blame, by the ſtandard of their party. A unity of party comes in place of a unity of character, and a warm and blind attachment to a particular ſet of meaſures, or rather to a particular junto of men, is held to be the Catholic virtue of the Stateſman and Politician.

But though in the circles of political cabal this doctrine is commonly allowed, the people at large make diſtinctions ſomewhat beyond it. They form an eſtimate of individuals ſeparately from the ſide to which they belong, and repoſe on private worth a confidence of a firmer kind than that which depends on the general complexion of a party.

It muſt flatter your Grace to be told, that ſuch has been hitherto the eſtimation of your character with the public; that the general opinion marked you out for one, on whoſe virtue we might rely, as a ſecurity againſt his doing any thing, either in oppoſition or in power, unworthy of a good man. It happened, indeed unfortunately, that ſome of that party,

with whom you was connected, required ſuch a ſurety; that, like other rich ſureties, you riſked your reputation in alliance with their want of it. It is in reputation as in money; there is in abſolute bankruptcy an advantage of which profligate men avail themſelves. Having nothing elſe to loſe, they ſet deeper ſtakes, and play bolder ſtrokes than men of property and credit; and when ſuch ſtrokes are ſucceſsful, the world is too apt to forget the profligacy of the adventure in its good fortune. In one inſtance, too ſtriking to be ſoon forgotten, the country narrowly eſcaped a ſituation in which an attempt of this ſort might have ſucceeded—but we recollect, my Lord, that even in the ſituation we feared, it would *not* have ſucceeded; that the integrity and the honour of the D. of P———— would have prevented it.

Thus, impreſſed with a ſenſe of reſpect and gratitude to his name, he will not wonder at our ſurpriſe and diſappointment on ſeeing it lately included in an inſtrument which it was impoſſible not to feel as a public national diſgrace. There is ſomething in the very nature of a money tranſaction, which makes one always deſirous to manage it with privacy and delicacy. It is like ſome other humiliating neceſſities of our condition, which we ſubmit to with reluctance, and wiſh neither to be ſeen nor remembered; like theſe too, the propriety of its delicate management is increaſed in proportion to the rank of the parties. There is often magnificence in the ſpending of money; but the borrowing of it is always a paltry ſort of buſineſs, to which the imagination cannot annex

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any idea of ſublimity, unleſs indeed it might trace a diſtant one in the ruin of the lenders. There are authors of your Grace's acquaintance who can afford examples of the ſublime in this way.

But the matter is ſerious, my Lord, and I will not indulge myſelf further in any parentheſis of fancy. I ſpeak with the regret of a fellow-citizen; others will queſtion you with the triumph of an enemy. They will aſk if it became your Grace, and your confederates in this buſineſs, to be parties to a deed which carried the ſecond name in the empire to a market of foreign Jews; to ſupplicate a loan, and mortgage for the ſecurity part of the realm of E———; to open a ſubſcription like thoſe for a family in diſtreſs, and to copy the features of the tranſaction from the moſt hackney of ſuch precedents; to take up money which was to be re-imburſed by way of *Lottery*, the trick of ſtrolling pedlars, and bankrupt dealers in ſmall-ware. But I ſpare my countrymen ſo mortifying a detail. They will bluſh to read it even here; but what will be their feelings, when they think of ſuch a paper being ſtuck up in Flemiſh alehouſes, and conn'd over by every little ſhopkeeper of Antwerp, who can muſter up a thouſand guilders, for the vanity of being a creditor to the heir of G—— B———. The ſtatutes have not made it treaſon to imagine the death of the P—— of W———; but there is ſomething more humiliating, though it may not be ſo puniſhable as treaſon, in weighing his life againſt the fears of a Jew, and the calculations of a money-broker.

But

But the courteous maxims of our conſtitution are more extenſive than our penal laws. Neither theſe, nor indeed the nature of the tranſaction, will allow us to believe that the illuſtrious perſonages themſelves "can have done this wrong." It muſt have been the invention of ſome mean and deſperate ſpendthrift, accuſtomed to ſuch ſhifts, and inſenſible to their ignominy. Noble natures are often eaſy in proportion to their nobleneſs, and for youth and inexperience there is an additional apology; but we muſt ſtretch our indulgence far, to pardon the allowance or participation of ſuch a buſineſs to the D——s of P———— and N————, to E—l F———— and L—d S————. We blame but ſlightly Meſſ. E———— and P———. They are *official* to the P———; and profeſſional indifference of this ſort, the "iras & verba locant" may excuſe a lawyer; but you, my Lord, and your noble co-truſtees, have neither the apology of habit, nor the inducement of a fee, for "letting out" your character.

To ſuch men the country looked for protection, if any circumſtances ſhould happen (and at one time its fears had anticipated ſuch circumſtances) in which their protection might be neceſſary. Had not the glaring evidence of every news-paper prevented it, the fears of that former period would have guided our belief in the preſent, and we ſhould have filled up the truſtees in this deed accordingly. With the Dukedom of C———— and the Biſhoprick of O——— any truſtees might have ſerved; unleſs, indeed, the names to which I allude, like the *negative*

quantities

quantities in Algebra, had ſubſtracted from the ſolidity of pledges ſo valuable. Conſiſtency of character is a natural criticiſm in morals, as in poetry. There are names which we could have ſeen in ſuch a paper, with the degree of ill-natured ſatisfaction which ariſes from this conſiſtency, and we ſhould have given their owners that ſort of credit for the tranſaction which we afford to the dexterity of *Scapin* in the farce, or of a Barrington at the Old Bailey. But we cannot ſpare the names of P—y and B——k to ridicule or reproach; we would keep them, my Lord, if their noble owners will allow us, ſacred to honour, to virtue, and their country.

Amidſt the venial levity of youthful pleaſure and amuſement, we muſt ſtill imagine an ingenuous mind ſuch as we know the P——— to poſſeſs, ſometimes liſtening to more grave and dignified counſels. He cannot apply to perſons more worthy of his confidence than your Grace and your aſſociates; but the purity and dignity of your influence muſt be loſt for ever, if you allow it to degrade itſelf in offices ſo unworthy.

There is, on the other hand, a numerous circle of rank and faſhion which looks to his example as a pattern for its conduct. Their imitation will be doubly ſanctioned, if to his example they can add the authority of your acquieſcence. Alas! the moles and ſpecks of a fine portrait are eaſily copied by inferior artiſts; but its beauties eſcape their pencil. Every young man can make a long dinner at Weltjie's, can embarraſs his affairs, and borrow from uſurers to redeem them; but it is in the abi-

lity

lity of few to charm with the graces of manner and the flow of converſation; to inform their minds with claſſical knowledge, and to deliver that knowledge with eaſy and pointed elocution.

In certain elevated ſtations men cannot be forgotten of poſterity. Your illuſtrious friend, in the vivacity of the moment, may be thoughtleſs of what hiſtory ſhall ſay of him; your Grace, and your noble colleagues, in this tranſaction, are nearer the period when we anticipate its relation. Read again, my Lord, the inſtrument which has given occaſion to this haſty letter, and ſay whether it is ſuch a record as you would wiſh to deſcend to poſterity; even as you would wiſh one of your diſtant ſucceſſors to find, when he was ſeeking, with an honeſt pride, to blazon the atchievements of his anceſtors.

BRUTUS.

March 21ſt, 1791.

FINIS.